

Furthermore, Wilmington's slaves lived and worked in an intricate network of secrecy. They operated a hidden economy, trading goods, either stolen or personally made, in order to accumulate money to buy their freedom or to assist in an escape attempt. Wilmington was a destination point for escaped slaves were hoping for assistance in their northward flight through the city's underground abolitionist network. Many of the white merchants and sailors who assisted these escaped slaves were newly relocated to Wilmington from northern ports because of the naval stores and cotton booms that led to the city's growth.³⁸

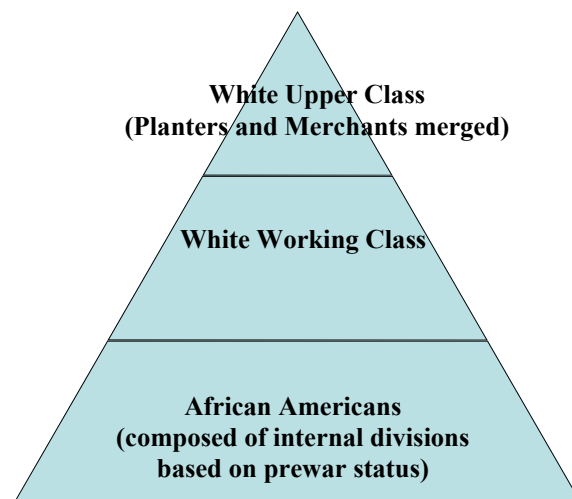


"Fugitive slaves escaping to the protection of our army at Wilmington--scene on the Cape Fear River." 1865. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, June 17, 1865. Image Courtesy of North Carolina Collection, UNC-CH

in *North Carolina*, 142; Cecelski, "Abraham Galloway" in *Democracy Betrayed*, 45-48.

³⁸ Such an example can be seen in enslaved plasterer George W. Price, who worked on construction of the Bellamy Mansion and later escaped from the city in 1862 to join the U.S. Navy. Price returned to Wilmington after the war to become a prominent member of the new black upper class that emerged by 1898. Cecelski, "Shores of Freedom," 174, 184-185, 192; Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle*, 449-451; Bishir, *Bellamy Mansion*, 27, 39, 55.

Wilmington Society, 1870



After the Civil War, Wilmington society underwent a series of changes that resulted in the uneasy merger of the primary interests of the former planter gentry and the successful merchants. Working-class whites who worked as artisans, clerks, and railroad employees occupied the upper levels of their category, while a good number of laboring whites at the lower levels of this category could be found in mills and transient jobs. African Americans separated into two basic categories immediately following emancipation based on their prewar status as either slaves or free blacks and also according to their prewar occupations—artisans such as builders and tradesmen were more secure than those who had previously only worked as unskilled laborers on plantations.³⁹

³⁹ Economists Ransom and Sutch, through study of several Southern cities, determined that artisan slaves did not benefit greatly from their skills after freedom but, instead, met with hostility when they migrated to cities and became competition to white artisans. However, within Wilmington, it can be seen that many pre-war artisans such as the Howes, Sadgwars,